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ABSTRACT

Thirty-one research studies in reading education completed at Canadian universities from 1928 to 1973 are reviewed in this paper, and an attempt is made to locate trends in reading research. The studies have been divided into the following categories: comprehension, reading achievement, remedial reading, and voluntary reading. Each category contains two or more studies. Studies which could not be classified according to these topics were grouped as miscellaneous. The paper concludes by stating that further research is necessary in order to meet the needs of classroom reading teachers. (LL)

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# A REVIEW OF CANADIAN RESEARCH IN READING EDUCATION

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# A REVIEW OF CANADIAN RESEARCH IN READING EDUCATION

(ABSTRACT)

This paper reviews briefly 31 doctoral dissertations in reading education completed at Canadian Universities from 1928 to 1973, discusses the nature and scope of these studies and attempts to locate trends in this area as well as identifies areas which need investigation.

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## A REVIEW OF CANADIAN RESEARCH IN READING EDUCATION*

Reading research for doctoral degrees in Canada has a history of more than four decades. The writer surveyed the published sources of research and found 31 doctoral dissertations in reading as completed up to 1973. The distribution by universities is given below in Table I and by years in Table II.

Table I

| Doctoral Dissertations Distribution by Universities | |
|---|---|
| Alberta | 7 |
| British Columbia | 5 |
| Calgary | 1 |
| McGill | 1 |
| Ottawa | 7 |
| Toronto | 10 |

Table II

| Doctoral Dissertations Distribution by Years | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1928 | 1 | 1961 | 1 |
| 1932 | 1 | 1966 | 1 |
| 1946 | 1 | 1967 | 2 |
| 1947 | 1 | 1968 | 1 |
| 1954 | 1 | 1969 | 7 |
| 1955 | 2 | 1970 | 1 |
| 1958 | 1 | 1971 | 1 |
| 1959 | 4 | 1972 | 2 |
| | | 1973 | 2 |

The purpose of this paper is to review briefly these research studies in reading education and to attempt to locate trends in reading research. It may be pointed out that these studies have been divided into: comprehension, reading achievement, remedial reading, and voluntary reading. Each of these topics contain two or more studies. Studies which could not be classified in the above topics have been grouped as miscellaneous.

The author must admit that the grouping is arbitrary and has been done for the sake of convenience. Most of these studies are from "Canadian Doctoral Dissertations in Reading Education: An Annotated Bibliography", prepared by this author, and available from the

*based on the doctoral dissertations completed at Canadian Universities

Educational Resources Information Center Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (Ed. 063 604). The studies will now be examined.

Comprehension:

Evanchko (9) investigated the nature of semantic process and the concept of semantic space and found that the dimensions of meaning of younger children were qualitatively inferior to and less logically coherent than those of the older children. Fagan's IRA award-winning dissertation (10) established that the presence of Embedding (conjoining) and Deletion (eliminating words which do not seem to effect the direct meaning) transformations in the basal readers tended to make the sentences and passages difficult for children to read. He also found that the type, not the number of transformations per sentence, was a significant factor in determining the difficulty of a sentence. Jackson (18) carried out an experiment on the role of memory processes and found a significant relationship between the measures of performance on free recall tasks and cloze test results. Johnson (19) did not find any significant relationship between the concepts measured and the reading achievement of boys but found opposite results in the case of girls. Rawson's (27) is another Canadian dissertation which won an IRA award. She suggests that reading may help the 9- and 10- year old move from Piaget's concrete operation stage to the formal operations stage. Robertson's dissertation (28) also won the IRA award. She found a significant relationship between the child's understanding of connectives and his sex, mental age, and abilities in listening, reading, and written language. Rogers (29) found highly significant differences between retarded and competent readers on the memory span test. Trosky's investigation (30) completed in 1971 suggested that as a result of supervisory conferences with the classroom teacher, modification in the latter's questioning behavior was noticed.

Reading Achievement

Andrade (2) studied the growth patterns in reading achievement of children in grades three to seven and found that the three highest groups of readiness categories maintained their position throughout the five-year period and those in the superior group remained superior on the average. The investigation by Beniskos (3) revealed that differences in reading achievement were related to sex differences on WISC scores. Buckley (4) found that the reading achievement in grade five was related to the verbal intelligence of the child and the occupation of his parents. Linn's study (21) established that grade one reading achievement was definitely related to the educational environment of the home and that the oldest child was significantly superior to other siblings. Partlow's investigation (26) confirmed that in 1952-54 public school pupils' achievement in arithmetic and reading was greater than their counterparts in 1933-38.

Remedial Reading

Ahrendt (1) showed that the treatment effect of an experimental reading program for potential school dropouts was not significant. de Merlis (7) established that primary children who had directional problems in word recognition were able to improve with phonetic-kinesthetic training. Hardy (15) completed her study in 1968 and found that the amount of retardation relative to the expected grade level tended to increase after the termination of remedial treatment of disabled readers. Koeber (20) finished her investigation in 1947. Her study emphasized the correction of defective vision, improvement of hearing, differentiated instruction, and individual guidance as contributary factors in reading achievement.

Voluntary Reading

Holmes (17 examined the voluntary reading of the public school pupils in Toronto schools. He found that there was a wide range of voluntary reading in boys and girls; that girls read more than boys; and that the proximity of the public library greatly increased the quality of their reading. Minkler (24) examined the voluntary reading interests of children in the intermediate grades across Canada. He discovered that neither the type of the school (rural, suburban, urban) nor the provincial area, exerted any influence on the reading interests of children and that the sex of the child was the strongest determinant of reading interests.

Miscellaneous

Cosgrave's experiment (5) supported Javal's theory that the upper parts of words, particularly at the level of the upper portions of the linear letter, are more important in legibility than the lower portions. Crausman (6) showed that there was a difference in timed perception between good and poor readers.

Sister Eagen's study (8) revealed that the pausing phenomena in oral reading were consistently and significantly able to discriminate between the silent reading comprehension ability of above-average, average, and below average readers. It also indicated that the processes of silent and oral reading in young children are similar.

Farrell (11) found that Northwest Syntax Screening Test was the best predictor of first grade reading in deprived population.

Sister Fidelia (12) compared the effects of the Bloomfield's linguistic method of teaching reading with Phonics We Use and did not find any significant differences in the two approaches.

Ford (13) investigated the factors involved in the reading ability of college students and found that the two main predictors of college

achievement were the characteristics of the home (e.g., number of books, magazines, and records in the home) and reading ability of the student.

Sister Gavin (14) studied the impact of phonological environment upon auditory discrimination of word pairs and its relation to beginning reading. ... investigation revealed that prior to initial reading achievement children developed an ability to discriminate auditory finer differentiation of stops and nasal sounds within certain phonemic environments. The ability of children to discriminate and recall sequences of sounds was also found to be related to initial reading achievement.

Hoff's investigation (16) confirmed the view that the parents participation helped to improve the child's reading ability.

Sister Madeline (22) found that children using multi-level materials showed greater gains in reading as compared with those who used one-level materials.

Maminta (23) indicated the close similarity between the kinds of basic patterns in the oral language of young children with those used in their readers.

Neville (25) concluded that beginning reading should include oral (reading aloud) and echoic (reading out loud after listening to a model of fluent reading) responses as well as silent reading.

Sister Truszka (31) investigated the reading interests of girls and found that the contents of books for adolescent girls dealt with religion, ideal, romance, teenage life and self-improvement. She also found a fair degree of homogenity in their choice of books.

7. There are only a few dissertations which seem to have direct application for classroom teachers. There is a need for research to answer the practical problems that teachers face in teaching reading.

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